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THE KING CORN GROWER.

DR. WOLFE, OF CINCINNATI, AND HIS WONDERFUL GOLDEN EAR.

He Made Jerry Rusk, Secretary of Agriculture, Acknowledge His Sovereignty. The Doctor's Experiments on His Mammoth Western Ranch.

WASHINGTON, April 24.—One day last week a short, robust old man, who wore a slouch hat and carried a large grip sack in his hand, called at the department of agriculture and sent his card to Secretary Rusk. He was shown in.



SECRETARY RUSK BEATEN.

"Glad to meet you, Mr. King Corn Grower. Have you some specimens of your skill with you? If so, trot 'em out." The visitor opened his big carpet bag and took out a astonishing number of little tin boxes, like a pestidgerator producing flowers from the inner recesses of a silk hat. He removed the sliding lids of these boxes, of which there were thirty, and spread them out on the secretary's desk. There were thirty small masses of corn, a chromatic scale in maize. Box No. 1 was full of kernels almost as white as periwinkles, while box No. 23 was as black as darkness. All the tints and shades known to the chemist were to be found in this product of a corn field laboratory.

"And here are some of the emblems of my royalty," said the visitor, diving deep down into his carpet sack and bringing forth two or three long yellow wands, set with rows of golden drops. "You think that a kingly ear of corn, do you?" exclaimed the secretary of agriculture. "You think it can't be beat? Well, wait here one minute and I'll take the conceit out of you."

Uncle Jerry touched his electric bell button, and in a couple of minutes he held in his hand a long ear of corn. "Now, size up with me," he exclaimed, merrily; "now we'll see if you are the King Corn Grower of America. Measure up, now!"

But lo and behold! the ear of yellow corn which for many months had been the pride of the department of agriculture was shorter by an inch or more than the ear which the visitor held aloft in triumph.

"I acknowledge the corn," said the secretary; "you are king; but now give us an account of yourself."

The visitor needed no second invitation. "My name is Wolfe—Dr. N. B. Wolfe—of Cincinnati," said he. "I practiced medicine for thirty-five years. Now I have retired and become a farmer."

"Being a millionaire, you can afford to till the soil," interjected the secretary. "Yes, and let me tell you what I have done with the soil. Let me talk corn to you. Some years ago I purchased four sections of land, 2,560 acres, in Reno county, Kansas, intending to have a cattle range. Mr. Secretary, you never saw a prettier piece of land. A stream runs through it, and it lies as a great basin, from the rim of which every other spot of its surface can be seen. In May, 1888, I gave orders to have one of the sections put under plow. To do this, the season being late, thirty breakers were set to work turning over the thick turf. Our furrows were a mile long. How long do you think it took us to break and plant a square mile of ground? Just twenty-two days. In the history of farming in Kansas never has so much been done in so short a time. Forty men and 125 horses did the work. Of course that year's crop of 'sod' corn didn't amount to much. It was not expected to."

"Last spring we began preparations for raising a real crop of corn. I had some ideas of my own about corn planting, and I put them into operation. The soil had not been touched for a year, but now we put the listers in, plowing out furrows ten inches deep, with a two inch subsoiler following to pulverize a soft bed in which to plant and bury the seed. Again, our furrows were a mile long, and by the time the three or four horses attached to each plow had dragged a heavy lister sixteen times across the field they were tired enough to quit for the day. Plowing and planting were done at the same time. When we had finished our field it looked like a lake on a breezy day. There was a succession of little ridges about three feet apart, and their crests rising a foot above the furrows which ran between them. In the bottoms of these furrows the corn grew, and when it had attained a height of four or five inches the crests of the furrows were harrowed off and the earth thus disturbed fell into the furrows and covered the plant completely. The surface of the field was now perfectly level again, and no corn could be seen. In a short time the bright green blades reappeared, and when they had grown up six or eight inches the cultivators were set to work shoveling the earth toward the plant. Twice afterward the cultivators went through the field, and when the corn was up 15 or 18 inches, and again when it was about 30 inches. Then the crop was laid by to make itself."

secretary of agriculture, now thoroughly interested.

"How did it do? Just wait till you hear the figures. Every grain of seed seemed to have fruited. Every stalk bore a good ear, many two ears. When we can harvest we found a great deal of corn. It seemed as if the heaps never would stop growing in my crib. It was a perfect mountain of corn. Why, from the 500 acres devoted to this crop 88,500 bushels of first class corn were gathered, shelled, measured and weighed. From 140 acres of oats, the remainder of the section, the yield was 5,300 bushels, giving us a total of 44,000 bushels of grain—the largest crop ever gathered from one section of land in America."

"Just think what a quantity of grain that is, Mr. Secretary," continued Dr. Wolfe, with the genuine enthusiasm of a farmer, a statistician and an economist combined in one. "It would load nearly a thousand wagons and would fill three freight trains, each composed of thirty-five cars. It is a greater quantity of grain than was imported by the United States in the last fiscal year. What would the farmers of Germany, of Holland or England think of a crop like that? And this must be more amaze us when we reflect that my farm is right in the midst of what was once known as the 'Great American' desert—the region of which the authoritative Humboldt, whose word no one ever dared dispute, wrote 'it is as sterile as Sahara.'"

"I have been out in that country," said Secretary Rusk, "and I saw no desert there. Do you think it ever was a desert?"

"I do not. While it is true that vegetable life has never manifested itself luxuriantly in this region, and that it was apparently barren, I have my own theory as to the causes. The land was always rich, was always waiting to be tickled with the plow and smile in return with a bountiful crop, but it was for an unknown period of time the runway for millions of buffalo which traveled north every spring and south every fall. The hoofs of the buffalo destroyed the grass roots, and gave to geography that immense fiction, 'The Great American Desert.' In 1870 the herds of buffalo became sensibly reduced in number, and in the fall of 1874 the bison disappeared from the plains of Kansas, never more to return. Coincident with his disappearance the grass began to grow on the hitherto dusty plains, and now it carpets the earth richly with green. Some say the buffalo enriched the soil and made it possible for the grass to grow, but I do not believe the fertility of the earth depends on top dressing. By planting the seed deep in the ground the germ reaches the electricity of the earth, and from this relation is nourished into life and stimulated into development. My crop of corn, twice or three times as great as that harvested by my neighbors, who plant in the old way, near the surface, attests the correctness of this theory. I did not make any money on my crop—no one can make money raising corn at present prices—but I succeeded in accomplishing what I started out to do, and that was to give the American farmer an object lesson in the value of going below the surface of the ground with seed which is to make his crops."

"I guess we shall have to confirm your title as the King Corn Grower of America," said Secretary Rusk.

"Thanks for that. I confess I am an enthusiast on the subject of corn. All my life, though engaged in the practice of medicine, I have kept close watch of the agricultural interests of our country. See how corn has entered into our national life. It is the one distinctively American product of the farm. It is a plant of American origin. In the universality of its uses, and its intrinsic importance to mankind, no other grain can be compared with it. Readily adapting itself to every variety of climate and soil, it is grown from the warmest regions of the torrid zone to the land of short summers in northern Canada. The first settlers learned from the Indians how to grow it, and a distinguished historian once told me the first larceny committed in America was when a party of Puritans stole the horse of corn from an Indian village in Massachusetts. The James river settlers, taught the art of corn raising by the Indians, had thirty acres under cultivation within three years after their arrival. It is a curious circumstance that the James river Indians and



THIRTY PLOWS TOGETHER.

The New England Indians had precisely the same method of planting. They dug little holes in the ground and put small fishes in along with the seed. At Plymouth in 1625 a writer said: 'You may see in one township a hundred acres together set with these small herrings or shads, every acre taking a thousand of them, and an acre thus dressed will produce so much corn as three acres without fish.' Ah, Mr. Secretary, if they had only had my deep planting along with the herring in each hill! "Undoubtedly corn saved the early settlements in America. But for maize the first colonists would have perished, and this continent would now be a century or two behind the present mark. Corn saved the day for our forefathers when they struggled for independence. Without corn there would have been no revolution—no great republic to lead the world into new paths of government. In the struggle between north and south in the late war it was corn against cot-

ton—two agricultural kings in mortal combat—and corn was the victor. Why should I not love this beautiful plant?"

"Moreover," continued the doctor, placing his hand on the shoulder of the secretary of agriculture, "corn is today used for food, directly and indirectly, by a greater number of the earth's inhabitants than any other article. Mr. Martin, of the New York Produce Exchange, whom I met only this morning at the hotel, told me corn was never so popular in Europe as it is today. The demand for it over there is so great that the export is limited only by the vessel room available. Yet it is within my recollection and yours, Mr. Secretary, when the exports were a mere trifle. I remember reading as late as 1847 an official report which stated in effect that the value of Indian corn had been heightened by the recent introduction of it into Great Britain, and that while it had not at once received universal approbation there was reason to believe it would win more favor there when more pains were taken to prepare it for a foreign market. When you and I were boys, Mr. Secretary, a few ships could hold all the corn that was exported from our shores. Now whole fleets sail with their holds full of the yellow grain and come back for more. Corn has literally conquered the earth, and yet we of the prairies burn it in our stoves."

"Why?"

"There is too much corn. Much as I love this royal grain, my eyes are not blinded. Corn is king, but we do not need to make it a tyrant. We must dethrone it. Thirty years ago the good people of a section of our country thought cotton was king, that it ruled the land. One day a 'mud-sill' rose in his place in congress, armed with official documents, and made the astounding statement that the hay crop of the country quite doubled the value of the crop of cotton. This hitherto undiscovered fact disturbed the stability of the Union. It recast the constitution, freed slaves, made a new nation. We do not want kings on our farms. Kings are un-American. We must dethrone corn, and in his place set a republic of diversified crops. We need more wheat, oats, rye, barley, sorghum, beans, peas, beets, goobers, hemp and tobacco. Our bins and barns are literally bursting with corn, for which there is no market at a price that will repay first cost. Corn absorbs too much of our energies, exacts too much of his subjects."

And when the shades of evening fell, and the typewriter girls, and the seed girls, and the clerks and every one was gone, there sat short Dr. Wolfe and tall Secretary Rusk, still talking corn.

WALTER WELLMAN.

A NEW SWINDLE.

How Certain New Yorkers Have Been "Done Up" of Late. (Special Correspondence.)

NEW YORK, April 24.—The ingenuity of the New York sharper is proverbial, but the latest swindling scheme that has been developed really soars into the realms of high art. It is being worked by a very clever couple—a medium sized, rather nice looking man, and a delicate, modest appearing woman. How many times they have been successful is not known, for the police have not, as yet, been informed of their operations. I only heard of it by accident.

While at lunch with some friends one day this week an old friend of mine joined the party. For the better appreciation of the story, I may be permitted to remark that he is a solid and prosperous looking citizen of benevolent appearance.

"When I was coming from my house to the elevated station," he began, with the air of a man who has a story to tell, "there came round the corner, just in front of me, a pretty, modest looking little woman trying to lead a very drunken man. The fellow was well dressed and not bad looking, but he was horribly drunk. He would lurch over against her every few steps and nearly knocked her over several times. Through it all he was good natured, even drunkenly affectionate."

"As I passed them he lunched against me and the woman, who naturally seemed much distressed, spoke: 'Would you be so kind as to help me take my husband home,' she said. 'It is only around the corner, but I'm afraid he will push me down; he's been out all night and I must get him home.' The appeal was so simple and pathetic that I of course took hold of his other arm and steadied him around the corner and saw him safe in the hallway of one of the big flats. I noticed that he lunched up against me once or twice, but I thought nothing of it until I reached the City hall station, when I went to look at my watch. It was gone, and my pocketbook had evidently departed to keep it company. He certainly could not have picked my pocket if he had been as drunk as he seemed to be," concluded the old gentleman sagaciously.

"That was this morning?" queried a member of the party, who had listened to the recital with much interest.

"Yes."

"Well, I guess it must be the same couple who played exactly the same game on me one day last week. They took \$180 in cash and a \$200 watch from me."

"Well, they only got fifty odd dollars from me, but my watch was worth \$200," said the first speaker. "I went to inquire about them at the flat, but no such people lived there. They probably only stood in the hallway until I got out of sight."

"Why don't you apply to the police?" I inquired.

"I'd rather bear the loss than have the story with my name in the papers," they chorused in answer.

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